

faith in focus

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of New Zealand

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**"There is a
time for
everything,
and a
season for
every
activity
under
heaven..."**

Ecclesiastes 3:1

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Editorial

In 1980 *Christianity Today* reported that the Uniting Church in Australia had leased one of its Sydney buildings to a homosexually-oriented Metropolitan Community Church. The "gay" church was exported from the Los Angeles, California, church of the same name to Australia in 1975. The Anglican dean of Sydney, Lance Shilton, commented that a special church for homosexuals was as logical as a church for "people who beat their wives or have bad tempers."

Lance Shilton was spot on. Legitimising a deviant behaviour, such as homosexuality, doesn't help people have their "rights" - it only means yet another part of the relationship spectrum is distorted and destroyed. It is not only unnatural — it is ungodly. It is at this kind of time in human history that man's rebellion against God becomes clearly shown. Romans 1:18-32 puts us in no doubts about this.

But it is also a time when the biblical witness to marriage can be more vividly shown. The decision to allow local city and state officials in the United States to grant marriage licences within their own areas has created a strong reaction nationally. The place and purpose of scriptural marriage has become promoted. We see that in this issue of *Faith in Focus*, with the Rev. John Haverland's lead article and the Civil Unions Submission by our synodical Committee for Contact with the Government.

It is also an occasion when we can be encouraged in our own witness to those caught up in the homosexual lifestyle. A number of us have close family who have fallen into this selfish trap. And even in the very extreme justification they make to you for their 'choice,' they are pleading for you to tell the old, old story — the story of Jesus and His love. Let's respond out of that love. But let's be very, very careful not to accommodate their 'love'.

*"Sin is sovereign
till sovereign grace dethrones it."*

Charles Spurgeon

The opinions expressed in this magazine are not to be considered the official position of the Reformed Churches of NZ unless they expound the Biblical system of doctrine contained in the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dordt, or the Westminster Confession of Faith, or reflect the successive Acts of Synod of the Reformed Churches of NZ. On the other hand, care is taken to ensure that articles and opinions do not directly contradict the official position of the Reformed Churches as contained in the above sources without attention being called to that fact.

Sanctified sex

John Haverland

If there is one word that is bound to get people's immediate attention it is the word "Sex". That word is powerful and eye-catching.

A little boy came home from his first day at his new school with a question; "Mum! What is sex?" His mum was taken aback. She had not expected this question after only one day at school and wondered what they were teaching the children at this new school. After doing some quick thinking she decided that this was probably a good time to explain "the birds and the bees" to her young son. The explanation about mummies and daddies and babies took a bit of time and a lot of thinking. When she has finished her son held up his health card from school and, with a bewildered expression, said; "Boy mum, how are we going to fit all that in this little box here where it says, 'SEX'?"(1).

Sex, of course, begins with something as simple as just marking down whether you are male or female. But it doesn't stay that simple, especially living in our present society.

The Present Situation

There was a time when people hardly talked about sexual matters and all you saw on TV or the movies was a kiss. Those days have long gone. Now sexuality is out in the open; it is flaunted and exposed; it is used and abused; it is on display in movies and videos and on TV - especially in advertising. Beautiful women are used to sell everything from perfume to chainsaws, from shampoo to safety gear, from coffee to cars. We live in a society saturated with sex.

Not only are sexual matters openly displayed but sex is widely practiced without any restraint or boundaries. A quarter of young New Zealanders 15 years and younger are sexually active. That figure climbs to 45% for 15 to 17 year olds. By the time they are 20 the majority of young New Zealanders have experienced sex. Teenagers set themselves up for sexual immorality with a combination of parties, alcohol and drugs. But it isn't just the party setting that encourages sexual promiscuity; 74% of girls said they lost their virginity at home around 4 pm, before their parents came home from work.

All this has serious life-changing consequences. A study published in 2003 showed that New Zealand has the third highest rate of teen pregnancies out of the 30 OECD countries. Rates of sexually transmitted diseases are going through the roof.

The Underlying Problem

Underlying these disturbing statistics is a deeper problem: immoral relationships are indulged without any moral framework. Recently a principal of an intermediate school was quoted as saying; "Kids will experiment with all sorts of things and sex is just like cigarettes and other naughty things." If a school principal can down-play the importance of the sexual relationship in a comment like this it is little wonder that young people themselves take it very casually.

Our society has lost its moral base. People have discarded the Bible as the basis for ethics. God and his laws are ignored. We are in a sea of relativism. There are no moral standards applied to the sexual relationship and there is no meaningful discussion as to what is right or wrong.

Nor are the law-makers of our country giving us any help in this area. As I write a select committee is considering the Civil

company with many of the so-called 'stars' of Hollywood today). Men in Greek society kept prostitutes for pleasure, mistresses for company and wives for having legitimate children and looking after their homes. Both men and women in that culture lived "in passionate lust" because they did "not know God" (1 Thess 4:5). They took God's beautiful gift of sex and turned love into lust - an unrestrained feeling that masters a man and abuses a woman.

God's Command

One of God's commands is that we should "avoid sexual immorality". (1 Thess 4:3). In the Scriptures this refers to any kind of improper sexual relationship or expression including adultery, incest, homosexuality, prostitution and bestiality. These were practiced in the Greek and Roman culture and most of these are widespread in our day and age and in our society. The Lord's



Union Bill - a Bill that, if passed, would give all couples, regardless of their sexual orientation and relationship, the same legal standing before the law.

Nothing New Under the Sun

The immorality of the 21st century has a long history. Twenty centuries ago, in the time of the early church, Greek and Roman culture was rife with immorality, especially because it was closely connected with pagan religion and ritual prostitution. Most people were tolerant of sexual promiscuity. Divorce and remarriage were common. In Rome the wealthy women identified the years by the names of their husbands. One writer noted one woman who had eight husbands in five years. (She would have been in good

command is clear: avoid all sexual immorality; stay away from it; give it a wide berth. Think of Joseph who ran out of the house when tempted by Potiphar's wife. All of us, single and married, need to avoid temptation in this area. Don't watch films that are full of affairs and adultery; these will weaken your attitude to these sins. They will de-sensitize your conscience regarding this evil. Those of us who are married and find ourselves attracted to another person need to deal ruthlessly with that temptation. Don't give it any space. Keep away from that other person. No one should think they are beyond falling in this area. The Apostle Paul warned us; "if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!" (1 Cor 10:12).

The Right Context

All of this is not to oppose the sexual relationship itself. The sexual relationship is a gift of God to be enjoyed but it must be shared in the context of marriage. God intended it to be enjoyed in the context of the commitment, stability and security of marriage - of a relationship where a man and a woman have made public legal promises to each other.

C.S. Lewis has a good illustration of this where he compared sex to a fire. A fire works well in a woodburner or fireplace. It gives heat and light and makes the room cozy. But if it leaps out of the fireplace it causes much destruction and damage. So too with sex. God designed it to function within the fireplace of marriage where it will give intimacy, warmth and joy. Take it out of that context and it will be physically, emotionally and spiritually destructive.

God has also given us marriage to prevent immorality. Paul explained this to the church in Corinth when he told them that "since there is so much immorality each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband" (1 Cor 7:2). The sexual desire is strong. That is how God has made us. But God wills that the pleasures of the sexual relationship are to be enjoyed only with our spouse. This is why the Bible celebrates sexual love in marriage, as in the Song of Songs and these verses from the book of Proverbs:

"May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth.

A loving doe, a graceful deer - may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be captivated by her love." (Prov 5:18-19).

A healthy and satisfying sexual relationship is an important part of marriage and will help us to avoid sexual immorality.

Honour One Another

The Lord wants all Christians, single or married, young or old, to be holy in all our relationships. We must be different from the people of the world. Most of the young people in New Zealand will not be virgins when they marry; God wants us to be different - he wants us to be pure. Many married people will have an affair at some time in their marriage or they will separate and divorce; God wants us to be different - he wants us to be holy. People in the world will make coarse and rude jokes about the sexual relationship; God wants us to be different - he wants us to avoid "obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place." Young men are to treat "older women as mothers and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity" (1 Tim 5:2). Those of us who are

married must treat our spouse with purity, respect and honour.

Honouring one another also means we will wait with sex until marriage. A sexual relationship before marriage is against God's commands and it dishonours the other person. You take away from that young woman the purity she should give to her husband on the day she marries. You also wrong her father by violating his daughter, and you wrong her future husband by taking a precious gift that belongs to him. Christian young people who are going together or who are engaged must make every effort to keep sex until their wedding day and so keep the marriage bed undefiled.

Too Late?

Some of you may be thinking that you would have liked to be pure and holy and to keep sex within the bounds of marriage - but it is too late - you have already sinned against the Lord and against others in this area. Perhaps you sinned in ignorance because you did not know about God's commands. Or perhaps you did know God's commands and will but you rebelled anyway. Maybe you have already lost that purity that the Bible describes. Maybe you have already wronged another sexually.

These are sins and we should not make light of them. Yet you must also remember that if you repent of your sin God promises to forgive you and to cleanse you of all unrighteousness. If you truly repent God will forgive you and not hold that against you.

And all is not lost. You can make a new beginning. Think of Rahab who was a prostitute in Jericho. As Israel prepared to attack her city she feared the judgment of God and pleaded that they would spare her life. Later on, after Israel had taken the city, she married an Israelite named Salmon and she became an ancestor of David and of Jesus (Matt 1:5). We should take encouragement from this example and from the Lord's promises of forgiveness.

We live in a society that flaunts sex and is inundated with sexuality. God's laws are either unknown or ignored. In this context God commands us to avoid sexual immorality. If you are single he wants you to be pure and holy and to seek first his kingdom and his righteousness. If you are married the Lord wants you to enjoy the fulfilment of the sexual relationship within the context of that relationship of husband and wife and to work together in his church and kingdom. In all we do the Lord wants us to be "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." (1 Pet 2:9).

The Rev. J. Haverland is the minister of the Reformed Church of Pukekohe.

(1). I borrowed this story from the editorial by Rev John Westendorp in the August 1999 issue of 'Trowel and Sword'.

A submission on the Civil Union Bill

Political Contacts Committee of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand

To the Justice and Electoral Select Committee,

Dear honourable Members of Parliament,

We represent the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, a Christian denomination with twenty one congregations. Our committee is a standing committee of the Synod of the Reformed Churches. We would like to present this submission in person.

The Civil Union bill is proposed legislation that will be harmful to New Zealanders and New Zealand society. For that reason, we strongly believe that it should be rejected by Parliament as bad legislation. We have reached this conclusion from a wide ranging

consideration of the proposal to introduce this new category of state-sanctioned relationships into New Zealand. Since this bill is not necessary for those who may presently marry, it is patently designed to allow gay marriage. Heterosexual marriage at present does not necessarily imply a religious commitment, so there is no need for civil unions to do away with the term "marriage" for the union of heterosexuals. Clearly, the framers of this new legislation see the Civil Union bill as a device to allow homosexual marriage by another name. Apart from the use of the terms "marriage", and "husband and wife", every other privilege available to married persons appear to be now available to those who will be united in a civil union ceremony. This is ensured by the companion bill, the Relationships bill.

It is the feature of the Civil Union bill,

which enables homosexual union as an equivalent to marriage, which is our greatest concern. We would like to outline four reasons why the Civil Union bill will be destructive for society:

1. The sentiments of the Civil Union bill arise out of a defective and dangerous philosophical viewpoint and world view which will become further entrenched in the public square as a result of passing this bill.

Societies derive ethical decisions from a philosophical commitment. What is the prevailing philosophical commitment in New Zealand society and government? It is a philosophy of materialism, evolutionary biology and moral relativity. (1) Following the so-called enlightenment and the influence of philosophers such as Immanuel Kant, Western societies gradually shrugged off a world view which took the God of the Bible seriously and progressively took the view of Kant and others that metaphysical claims including a true knowledge of God could not be proved. God was effectively fenced off in an upper-story realm to leave men to organise their own affairs according to their autonomous reason. With the rise of evolutionary science so-called, man, according to the commitment of our public educators, became merely the product of blind chance, evolved from some earlier life-form and essentially no more noble or worthy of privilege than any other living being or animal. Man was seen as only matter, whose life was, like a tree or a fish, fully extinguished on the point of physical death. The companion Darwinian notion of the survival of the fittest helped produce the excesses of Nazism in Germany in the twentieth century. This is not surprising, because we would expect that whenever autonomous reason replaces moral absolutes, inevitably moral relativism follows. In other words, the consideration of right or wrong becomes based on the reasoning of individuals and groups in society, making personal and social ethics a matter of personal opinion. Once such a standpoint takes hold in a society, inevitably there will be a change in private and public morality. Whereas once morality was based upon immutable absolutes that were deemed to have been revealed by God, ethical truth-claims are now derived from a philosophical vantage point that assumes: man is the product of blind chance plus time and is not a creation of God made in His own image; and secondly, that God and His will cannot be known, because as philosophical materialists modern men assume that there can be no authentic certain knowledge of anything that transcends this material phenomenal world. The net result of such a perspective is that man is considered

capable of deciding and settling ethical truths without recourse to God's Law or any metaphysical reference point.

For a Christian there are considerable problems with this modern world view (which could be termed "secular humanism"). Firstly, it is grounded upon a basic scepticism concerning God and His revelation to mankind; secondly it fails to take into account the reality of the fallenness of human nature; and thirdly, it leads to ethical conclusions which are destructive to human society. Moral relativism denies and undermines the authority of God and His morality. When moral relativism is accepted, the old boundary markers are destroyed so that man no longer retains the parameters of a safe ethical system. Because, as we will show, the Civil Union bill arises in just such a context of autonomous human reason without reference to the absolutes of a divinely revealed moral system, the assumptions behind this bill both justify the dangerous philosophy of secular humanism



and entrench morally destructive practices and values within New Zealand society.

A 'positive human right'?

That this Civil Union bill is designed to promote human rights without any reference to God's moral absolutes is implied plainly at the beginning of the document, where we read: "The Bill provides[...]a mechanism for same sex couples to formally solemnise their relationship [as] part of the Government's objective of creating a positive human rights culture" [emphasis added]. The bill assumes that the government has correctly discerned what constitutes a "positive human right", even though homosexuality is denounced in Scripture as an evil and a distortion of God's intentions. Moral absolutes are out of the picture for this bill which sees homosexual practice as a "positive" human right.

Christianity, however, the only true philosophy, argues that all moral decisions should be based on moral absolutes revealed by God and which are summarised in the Ten Commandments. Homosexuals themselves acknowledge that the major part of society will never give moral assent to their behaviour, this is because even 'non-

religious' people recognise the righteous quality of biblical law. They do so because the mind of man is not a 'tabula rasa' as the behaviourist social engineers assert, but certain foundational knowledge grids are present at birth as the Bible affirms.

When human governments are instructed to reward good and punish evil in Romans 13, it is assumed that the 'good and evil' referred to will be in accordance with the revealed will of God in Scripture.

2. Sanctioning homosexual civil unions will be destructive for both individuals and society

While a full biblical survey of God's perspective on homosexuality is not necessary, it cannot be denied that homosexuality is indeed condemned in Scripture.(2) Homosexuality is denounced in the Bible in such a way that illustrates that unrepentant homosexuals are even excluded from the possibility of attaining to heaven or eternal life (1 Cor. 6:9). On the contrary, the Bible concludes that a practicing homosexual is someone condemned to eternal damnation. Christians, who are often vilified because they point out what the Scripture teaches concerning the practice of homosexuality, are really truly compassionate towards homosexuals. For we realise the dire state of any unrepentant sinner, and we long to see them repent of their sin and come to Christ for forgiveness. This is also why we preach Christ, for the Lord Jesus Christ is able to save anyone who will come to Him in faith. Christ is a willing Saviour: He says "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28); He is a loving Saviour who is willing to forgive: On the cross, 'Jesus was saying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing"' (Luke 23:34); and He is a complete Saviour: "but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently. Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:24-25).

It is a well-known fact that statistically homosexuals are the most active spreaders of AIDS and the HIV virus, a terrible disease which continues to reap a harvest of death amongst both homosexual and increasingly heterosexual populations throughout the world. Governments who sanction, legalise and now propose to elevate homosexual relationships to the status of marriage must share culpability for the modern plague of AIDS. Society at large is affected by the spread of AIDS through the exposure of innocents to the disease (e.g. haemophiliacs, whole blood recipients, police, ambulance, rescue personnel) and the profound economic costs that influence

us all, even though we might not be personally afflicted by the disease itself. Other sexually transmitted diseases are also rife in the homosexual community as men and women participate in unnatural practices which lay homosexuals open to destructive consequences (see also Romans 1:24-32).

Homosexual civil unions and the complete equality of such unions, reinforced by the granting of the privileges and responsibilities of married couples through the proposed Relationships bill, exemplify the desire by proponents of such relationships to further entrench homosexual "rights" and, therefore, homosexual practices.

3. Homosexual civil unions and access to the privileges of marriage through the provisions of the Relationship bill will also further subject our society to God's judgement.

The Bible gives us examples of God's response to societies that thumb their nose at His moral absolutes and especially in this matter of homosexuality and homosexual practice as it will be encouraged and further endorsed through the formal recognition of such unions. We have noticed how Romans 1 describes the judgement that comes upon individual practitioners of homosexuality. However, there is also biblical evidence that demonstrates God's anger against societies as a whole which sanction homosexuality. Genesis 18:20 to 19:30 describes the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah when God sent angels to destroy the cities and their inhabitants. The context shows us that the prevailing sin was that of homosexuality (Gen. 19:5). The men of the city wanted to have sexual relation with angels whom they mistook for men. The verb translated "to

know" in verse 5 refers to sexual intercourse, as it does in eight of its ten occurrences in the rest of the Book of Genesis. Because of this sin, the entire society was destroyed in God's judgement. God has not changed and He may still judge societies in time and space for the same sins today as He did then. Neither can it be argued that the sin was that of rape and not of homosexuality, because we must read the Bible in its wider context; and that context tells us that homosexuality itself is a sin against God. It flies in the face of His created order as well as His express command – this is where the objection to the 'religious' connotations of marriage arise from. "A MAN should leave his Father and Mother and cleave to his own WIFE". It is also unlikely that God could justly destroy a whole society for the sin of a few. It seems that homosexuality must have been prevalent throughout that society and sanctioned by the culture, therefore the whole of the town came under God's judgement. Jude 7, in the New Testament, also asserts that "Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. [Thus] They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire".

Governments are God's servants

Nations are frequently punished for national sins in Scripture (see the book of Amos for further examples), which makes government support of homosexuality, including homosexual civil unions, a frightening prospect indeed. As those who know that we live in a moral universe governed by a supreme moral being, we must warn parliament against granting further rights to homosexuals, which are solely the prerogative of married heterosexual couples. God will not be mocked. Governments are described in Scripture (Rom. 13:3-4) as God's servants which are meant to reward the good and punish evil, not to entrench evil and call evil good and good evil. Any government that has the true interests of its people at heart will do well to heed the warnings of Scripture and draw back from a path which will only lead to the prospect of judgement and suffering.

4. Because homosexual civil unions are a parallel form of heterosexual marriage, God's original purpose for married relationships will be obscured and undermined.

Genesis 1:26 to 29 and Genesis 2:20-25 recount how God created both man and woman for marriage. The first text explains God's purpose for mankind. They were together to subdue the earth and populate it. Woman was to be man's helper in this great task and together as they took dominion over the earth for God's glory, they were to do so, for "God created man in His

own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth (Gen. 1:27-28).'"

This "filling" of the earth was intended to provide societies later to be defined as nations. The Bible stresses at many points that not only are the nations and their leaders to submit to the Lord Jesus Christ, but they all one day will so submit, thus fulfilling God's ultimate purpose for His creation (Ps. 72). Even though we stubbornly resist His will to form godly societies and to live according to His precepts, God will ultimately bring about His purposes so that even those nations and rulers who resist will feel the force of His wrath (Psalm 2). Marriage is the foundation plank of God's purposes to bring the earth fully under His dominion, where every corner of this world is a place where He is glorified and honoured.

Sex is for heterosexual marriage

Sex was, therefore, sanctioned as part of human behaviour in the context of monogamous heterosexual marriage and as part of God's design to create this ordered society and world to worship and glorify Him.(3) Children too are to be prepared for their role in the cultural mandate in the context of a faithful heterosexual marriage and while some single parents no doubt do a marvellous job of parenting the scholarly evidence is overwhelming that children are happier and more socially integrated as human beings when they are nurtured with a mum and a dad.(4) That human societies have indeed developed with the biological family unit as the basic building block is attested to throughout human history. 'Civilisation' has been developed around the need to provide for and protect the interests of first, family, then clan or kinship groups, communities and nation. It is therefore apparent from both a Christian and anthropologic/sociological perspective that the entrenchment of homosexuality in a civil union is an uncivil, uncivilised act of regression.

The first uncivilised deviation from the original creation order, the case of Lamech (Gen 4:19) who took two wives, is in a context of other vices including murder and arrogance; so that Reformed Presbyterian theologian and ethicist John Murray can say:

We can scarcely suppress the inference that the reference to Lamech's digamy [bigamy] is for the purpose of intimating to us that his departure from monogamy goes hand in hand with these other vices and is intended to carry an indirect indictment of its wrong.(5)



Further into the history of the human race (Genesis 6:1-3), we see that God denounces marriages which are arranged between the godly and the ungodly. God's displeasure at the ensuing wickedness which was the result of those unions ultimately led to the worldwide judgement of man through the flood we associate with the patriarch Noah. Therefore, God intended not only that the act of procreation should be between a man and woman, but ideally between a godly man and a godly woman. While this does not prove that the ungodly are not allowed to marry (the creation account shows God's righteous requirement for all men), it does illustrate that God intended sexual activity within a context of the faithful exercise of what might be called the cultural mandate, when monogamous heterosexual married partners together seek to subdue and populate the earth, creating a culture of worship and praise for their Creator.

Any sexual act outside of a faithful marital bond is considered wrong in God's eyes. Take the example of Joseph. When tempted to commit adultery by his master's wife he responded: "How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?"

Fornication, or sex outside the marriage bond, is equally discountenanced by Scripture. This in itself is proof that the Bible condemns homosexuality and homosexual unions, as well as De facto unions, because they are by their very nature and definition acts which must take place outside the only lawful marriage there can be. Even those outside of God's covenant community in patriarchal times still recognized the principle of the sanctity of marriage, as the interchange between Abimelech and Abraham demonstrates (Gen. 20:2-18).

Incest illustrates this

Furthermore, that sexual union is to be between a man and a woman in marriage is further circumscribed by the consanguinity laws which are still recognized in our own society. But these too come from the Christian ethical base (see Lev. 18:6ff; 20:11-21; Deut. 22:30; 27:20-23). Neither were these prohibitions to be limited to Old Testament times (1 Cor. 5:1ff). Paul rebukes the Corinthian church for failing to deal with a clear case of incest that had taken place among its members. Incest parallels homosexuality in this respect, that it circumvents marriage and is an improper use of the sexual faculty.

It is within this framework that we must understand the biblical prohibition against homosexuality, which we have touched upon above. Homosexual relations are condemned in Scripture, because like adultery and fornication they violate God's intentions for the human race to create a godly society. Sexual acts can only be sanctioned in a

monogamous marriage between a man and woman. Therefore, unsurprisingly the Bible universally condemns homosexual acts and by necessary consequence homosexual unions whether they bear the title of marriage or civil union; so that in the Old Testament incest (Lev.20:11), adultery and homosexuality were equally punishable by death. Even though the death penalty has been abrogated for these offences in the New Testament, they are still wicked acts which deserve both civil punishment and ecclesiastical sanctions.

And we know that it is not just the action of having an adulterous relationship, or sex outside of marriage that God condemns. Even lust outside of marriage is considered an offence against the Seventh Commandment by the Lord Jesus Christ in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:27-28). Since lust outside of marriage is considered adulterous, so too must homosexual lust. The Bible sees sex within heterosexual marriage as a beautiful and good thing. It is only when sex is distorted from God's original intentions when He created man that it becomes an evil, destroying persons spiritually and often physically as the modern AIDS and STD epidemics demonstrate.

Outside of marriage is celibacy

Moreover, when the Bible does acknowledge that not all men and women will get married, that in some circumstances it is lawful to remain unmarried, and that the single state can be equally fulfilling, God does not suggest by it that anyone might find refuge in some other kind of relationship which parallels monogamous heterosexual marriage. Instead the Lord tells us that those who renounce marriage lawfully do so either, to devote themselves to His service, or because they cannot be married through providential circumstances (e.g. because of persecution). Those outside of marriage in either situation are considered "eunuchs"; that is to say, those who are celibate (Matt. 18:11-12). To be outside of marriage is, therefore, to be celibate. A homosexual relationship is still not an option. And so, consistent with Jesus teaching, the Apostle Paul argues that those who have a problem with celibacy are to be married so that they will not burn with lust outside of marriage (1 Cor. 7:1-2; 8-9):

Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband[...]But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they remain even as I am; but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

Nowhere are homosexual unions



sanctioned as an alternative to marriage and as a legitimate relationship for indulging in sexual activity. It is equally the case that the Bible encourages sexual activity within a lawful marriage. And it is precisely because sex outside of the marriage union is considered evil that Paul urges husbands and wives not to deny sex to one another: "Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control (1 Cor. 7:5)". The temptation Satan will bring will be the temptation to seek sexual relief outside the marriage relationship which is implicitly illicit. Paul may also have in mind that God's purposes for the fulfilment of the cultural mandate will also be detrimentally affected when there is not a healthy sexual relationship within a marriage, reinforcing the proper sphere and end of marriage and sexuality. Without a fulfilling sex life, the bond of love and harmony that is so necessary for fulfilling the cultural mandate will be jeopardised.

Paul's teaching on marriage reaches its zenith in his letter to the Ephesians 5. There heterosexual monogamous marriage is compared to the relationship between Christ and His church; an idea present also in the Song of Solomon in the Old Testament. Because homosexual sex is anathema to God's morality, patently such a comparison between homosexual unions and the church of Christ would be thoroughly blasphemous.

In summary

To summarise we have noticed that:

Marriage was originally instituted by God as monogamous and heterosexual;

Marriage was ordained as God's means to have men and women made in His own image subdue the earth and populate it and

thus to create safe societies where God would be glorified and honoured; which societies God promises to bless;

Procreation was intended by God so that the earth would be populated by human societies, which were to be separated into nations. These nations were and are expected to submit to Him, worship Him and glorify Him in everything. This means that His ethical system is to be followed and observed by all men;

Sexual relations were also tied to monogamous heterosexual marriage, with procreation obviously a key immediate purpose for such a union;

Any other sexual relationship that falls outside of God's definition of marriage is a perversion of His eternal intentions and His moral will for mankind.

Homosexual unions contribute nothing towards God's purposes for the societies of men He has created. In an important early seminal study on patterns of homosexuality in a number of cultures, J. D. Unwin concluded that the record of mankind "does not contain a single instance of a group becoming civilised unless it has been absolutely [i.e. heterosexually] monogamous, nor is there any example of a group retaining its culture after it has adopted less rigorous customs".(6) In fact he concludes that only when societies have maintained heterosexual monogamy as a moral standard that there have been "manifestations of social energy, whether that energy be reflected in conquest, in art and sciences in the extension of the social vision, or in the substitution of monotheism for polytheism, and the exaltation of the conception of the one true God".(7) Other modern studies have confirmed Unwin's insights.(8)

What the state will do with the provisions of the Civil Union bill and its companion Relationships bill will be to condemn more young men and women, and society as a whole to more of the misery homosexuality always brings. Legislation that makes homosexuality more acceptable will inevitably increase its prevalence in society. We know that the filthy practices of homosexuals are wrong and unnatural and it behoves us as a nation to shun these sorts of activities that once brought God's wrath upon the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

We consider, therefore, that this bill arises out of a defective and dangerous philosophical viewpoint and world view which will become further entrenched if the bill is passed; sanctioning homosexual civil unions, also known as marriage, will be destructive for both individuals and society; homosexual civil unions and access to the privileges of marriage through the provisions of the Relationship bill will also further subject our society to the likelihood of God's judgement;

and because homosexual civil unions are a parallel form of heterosexual marriage, God's original purpose for married relationships will be obscured and undermined.

The members of the Political Contacts Committee are: G. H. de Jonge; J. Haakma; Rev. G. Milne (Convenor); M. Munroe; Rev. E. Rademaker.

1. For a Christian analysis of the history of human thought, see Francis Schaeffer, "How Should We Then Live", The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer (Wheaton: Crossway, 1982), 5:165-182.
2. For a good summary of the biblical statements concerning homosexuality as well as an engagement of theological attempts to justify the practice biblically, see John Jefferson Davis, *Evangelical Ethics: Issues Facing The Church Today* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 106-128.
3. The later departure from monogamy which we see in the later Patriarchs is obviously a departure from the ideal God had ordained originally, and was never

approved by God, but was tolerated for His own purposes.

4. David Popenoe, for example, writes: "Social science research is almost never conclusive. There are always methodological difficulties and stones left unturned. Yet in three decades of work as a social scientist, I know of few other bodies of data in which the weight of evidence is so decisively on one side of the issue: on the whole, for children, two-parent families are preferable to single-parent families and step families. If our prevailing views on family structure hinged solely on scholarly evidence, the current debate would never have arisen in the first place." David Popenoe, "The Controversial Truth," *New York Times*, 26 December 1992, pa21.
5. John Murray, *Principles of Conduct* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), 45-46.
6. J. D. Unwin, "Monogamy as a Condition of Social Energy," *Hibbert Journal*, 25 (1927):663.
7. *Ibid.*
8. See for example, Warren J. Gaddaille, "Cross-species and Cross-cultural Perspective," in Judd Marmor (ed.), *Homosexual Behavior: A Modern Reappraisal* (New York: Basic Books, 1980), 118.

World in focus

Lutheran church raises money by using eBay

A 1,500-member Lutheran church in Wauconda, Illinois, is using eBay to raise money for a new sanctuary.

The congregation has raised an average of US\$400 a month by selling parishoners' collector plates, books on tape, and old postcards through the online auction site. Parishoners have raised US\$1.5 million, with another US\$1.7 million to go. Whatever doesn't sell will be donated to Goodwill, but so far everything offered by church members has found a buyer.

+ *Wauconda, IL. Chamber of Commerce, 100 Main St., Wauconda, IL 60084 (847) 526-5580*
+ *The Church Herald, 4500 60th St., SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49512 (616) 698-7071*

Jordanian child custody ruling

A lawyer who has fought for the past year for Christian widow Siham Qandah to retain custody of her two children expects the Supreme Islamic Court of Jordan to rule against her.

If Qandah loses the appeal, she will be ordered to surrender her daughter Rawan, 15, and son Fadi, 14, to their Muslim guardian, Abdullah al-Muhtadi, who is the children's maternal uncle. If she refuses to do so the children will be taken from her forcibly, and she will be jailed for 30 days.

The uncle began to appropriate the children's monthly orphan benefits, and in 1998 filed a case to take custody of them so that he could raise them as Muslims.

Baptised and raised as Christians, the children are considered Muslims under Jordanian law until age 18 because of their

father's alleged "conversion." Qandah's Christian husband allegedly had secretly converted to Islam three years before his death.

+ *Compass Direct, PO Box 27250, Santa Ana, CA 92799-7250 (949) 862-0314*

Abortion clinic objects to childcare centre

An abortion clinic in Perth, Australia objected to plans for a childcare centre on a neighbouring property because the sight of children might upset its patients.

Marie Stopes International Australia, which operates the clinic, objected to the development of the childcare centre on an adjoining block.

The clinic operators said the sight and sound of children playing in a neighbouring property might cause emotional strain for women considering terminating a pregnancy. It also said right-to-life proponents who staged weekly protests outside the clinic might upset the children.

A mediation meeting between the childcare centre developers and a representative of Marie Stopes International Australia has resolved the objection through a condition that a two-metre brick fence be erected between the two properties.

+ *Marie Stopes International Australia, ABN 79 082 496 +61 (3) 9593 9651*

'Headhunter' firm finds clergy, church staff

Some churches are calling a headhunter to find a pastor; instead of a search committee.

David Lyons, a former corporate recruiter, wants churches to benefit from the same kind

of professional recruiting expertise that big companies employ to find executives.

Lyons started his Lewisville, Texas-based firm, MinisterSearch, to help churches find pastors and other staff members. The firm has worked with almost 100 churches in more than a dozen denominations, including Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Assembly of God, and nondenominational churches.

If churches don't want to pay the cost of a headhunter (MinisterSearch's fees typically run about 20 percent of the employee's first year compensation), they can use the internet to access a bigger pool of candidates. Churches can plug their requirements into web sites such as ChurchStaffing.com to generate a list of candidates.

+ MinisterSearch, 417 Oakbend, Suite 120, Lewisville, TX 75067 (866)732-7246

Three grades of Servant Movement in China

Mr. Xu Shuangfu, leader of the well-known Three Grades of Servant (TGS) movement in China, was arrested in April 2004 along with 90 other co-workers and followers.

Reports immediately tagged the TGS movement as an orthodox house church network. However, evidence now suggests otherwise. According to sources familiar with the movement, Xu has appointed himself the "supreme servant" in a movement where all members are divided into three "grades." Adherents are required to confess their sins to Xu, thus replacing God with a human deity. The movement also requires absolute allegiance; some members leaving the cult have received death threats. The Chinese government has occasionally made mistakes in identifying house church movements as "evil cults"; however, legitimate cults do exist in China.

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Federal Court tells school district censorship must stop

The Federal Court, in a case originally filed by the Alliance Defense Fund, has ordered an Arizona school district to stop censoring the parents of two students. The district had previously told the parents they could not include the word "God" in publicly posted messages to their children because the message violated the so-called "separation of church and state."

The messages that the parents applied to have inscribed on publicly viewable tiles at Pinnacle Peak Elementary School in the district's "Tiles for Smiles" program read, "God bless Quinn, We love you Mom and Dad" and "God bless Haley, We love you Mom and Dad."

"The court ruled that the school district was operating in a discriminatory manner," said Peter Gentala, counsel with the Center

for Arizona Policy, who litigated the case with assistance from the Alliance Defense Fund, "The district simply does not have the authority to decide that the Seidmans can't use the name of God on their tile."

+ 15333 North Pima Rd., Suite 165, Scottsdale, AZ 85260 (800) TELL-ADF

Conservative Congregationalists pass resolution against "homosexual marriage"

At the 56th Annual Meeting of the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference (CCCC) held 19-23 July in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, the CCCC Board of Directors proposed and the delegates unanimously approved a resolution condemning "Homosexual Marriage" and reaffirming Biblical marriage.

The CCCC was founded in 1948 by Congregational evangelicals opposed to the proposed merger with the Evangelical and Reformed Church to form the United Church of Christ (UCC), formed in 1957.

The CCCC traces its origins back to 1935 as a fellowship of evangelical Congregational churches and ministers within the General Council of Congregational Christian Churches. + Conservative Congregational Christian Conference, 7582 Currell Blvd., Suite 108, St. Paul, MN 55125 (651) 739-1474

van Halsema Fellowship

The H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies at Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary is offering a research fellowship to pastors from the Reformed tradition. The four-week fellowship honouring Emo F. J. Van Halsema includes a stipend. The application deadline is 1 Jan. 2005. For information, call (616) 526-7081; meeter@calvin.edu.

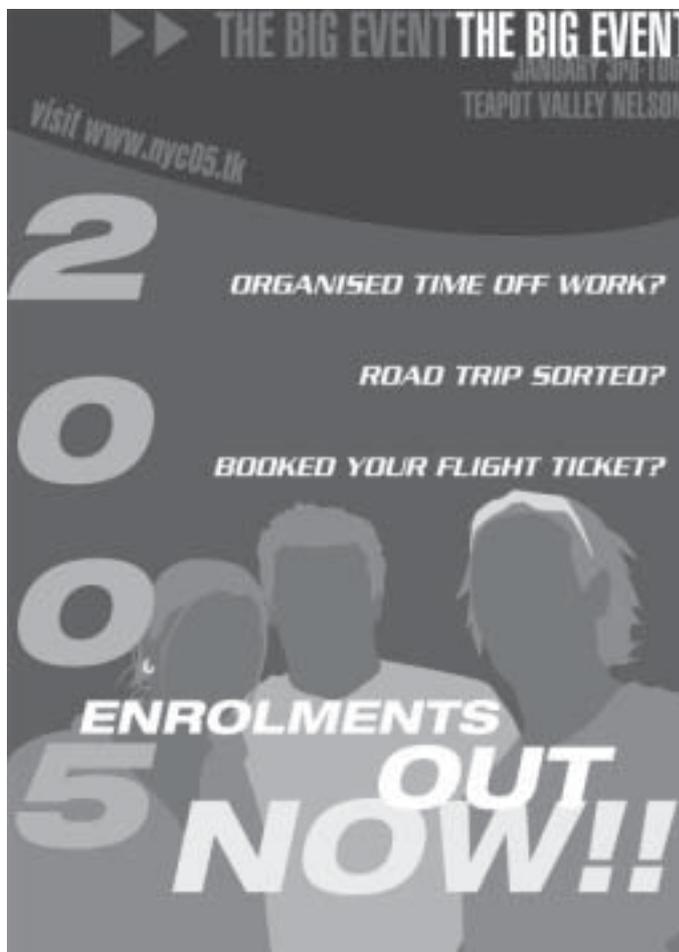
+ Susan Schmurr, Program Coordinator, The Meeter Center for Calvin Studies, Calvin College and Seminary, 1855 Knollcrest Circle SE, Grand Rapids MI 49546-4402

Protest as Mel Gibson's film only shown to Christians

The general secretary of the Council of Churches in Malaysia has criticised the decision by the Malaysian Film Censorship Board's to restrict the showing of Mel Gibson's film *The Passion of the Christ* only to Christians.

"We are not in agreement that this should be restricted to Christians only," said Rev. Dr. Hermen Shastri at the opening press conference at the World Council of Churches (WCC) Faith and Order plenary commission, which met in Kuala Lumpur from 28 July to 6 August, 2004.

"This goes against the grain of fostering inter-religious understanding, a cornerstone of Malaysian social life since the independence



of our country. We have expressed our displeasure and made our appeal," he added.

The decision not to allow it to be shown to Muslims has also been criticised in the Malaysian parliament and in the country's press.

+ Council of Churches of Malaysia, 26 Jalan Universiti, 46200 Petaling Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan, 603-7956 7092 / 7955 1587

Employee who wished to honour the Sabbath fired

Alliance Defense Fund has filed suit against the Rolling Hills Consolidated Library in Missouri for firing librarian Connie Rehm. The library fired Rehm for insubordination after she filed her request to no longer be scheduled to work on Sundays because of her religious beliefs. Library officials claim they made an attempt to accommodate Rehm by allowing a part-time employee to volunteer to work for her on Sundays, in return for her working on Saturdays.

ADF and the Christian Law Association filed the case, Constance J. Rehm v. Rolling Hills Consolidated Library and Patricia Lamb, in the United States District Court for the Western District of Missouri, St. Joseph Division.

Title VII of the Federal Civil Rights Act states that an employee's request for accommodation based upon a sincere religious belief can only be denied if the employer can demonstrate that the request

would cause undue hardship.

The lawsuit claims that the library has not made its case for denying Rehm's request and, additionally, went too far in firing her for insubordination.

*+ Alliance Defense Fund, 15333 North Pima Rd., Suite 165, Scottsdale, AZ 85260 (800) 835-5233
+ Rolling Hills Consolidated Library, (two locations) 1904 N. Belt Highway, St. Joseph, MO 64506 (816) 232-5479 - 514 W. Main, Savannah, MO 64885, (816) 324-4569*

Hindu fundamentalists step up campaign

Following the defeat of the pro-Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in this year's national elections, Hindu radicals have pressured the BJP to return to their Hindu nationalist roots. Activists from the radical Vishwa Hindu Parishad claim the BJP lost the election because they softened their policies and abandoned the Hindu cause. The BJP has announced they would return to their Hindutva roots; but the party is now using the term "nationalism" rather than "Hindutva" to avoid alienating their secular allies in politics. The United Nations Development Program noted in July that a rising number of violent incidents against religious minorities over the past few months posed a grave risk to an otherwise "cohesive" nation.

+ Compass Direct, PO Box 27250, Santa Ana, CA 92799-7250 (949) 862-0314

Aborting the born, too

Professor John Harris, who holds a chair in bioethics at Manchester University and is a member of the Human Genetics Commission, has said in *The Free Presbyterian Magazine of Scotland* that he does not see any distinction between aborting a fully grown unborn baby at forty weeks and killing a child after it has been born. He was reported also to have said that he did not believe that killing a child was always inexcusable. He would not, however, explain which defects or problems might be grounds for ending a baby's life, or how old a child might be and yet be destroyed."

+ The Free Presbyterian Magazine of Scotland, Editor: Rev K D Macleod, FP Manse, Leverburgh, Isle of Harris, HS5 3UA, UK.

Killings continue in Plateau State, Nigeria

The religious crisis that has engulfed the central Nigerian state of Plateau has claimed an estimated 10,000 lives and destroyed property worth millions of dollars. Over 300 churches have been destroyed, 250,000 people displaced, and US\$1.25 million spent on relief. The Roman Catholic archbishop of Jos has asked for repentance and a return to God by both Christians and Muslims to solve the issue.

+ Compass Direct, PO Box 27250, Santa Ana, CA 92799

Jews for Jesus outreach

Jews for Jesus, a San Francisco-based group, has trained more than 600 volunteers in the Washington DC area to evangelize the region's 220,000 Jews as part of a worldwide campaign called "Operation Behold Your God."

Washington director Stephen Katz said that "we are out there to ask people who they think Jesus is. We want to lovingly confront our people with the claims of Jesus to be our Messiah . . . We are not twisting arms for conversations. But if people want to stop and chat with us, that's fine."

The campaign is scheduled to end 18 Sept., a few days after Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year - and the timing has infuriated Jewish leaders. They have planned town hall meetings to warn the Jewish community about what they call the coming "threat," and they said they will dispatch counter-missionary teams, which will seek to discredit the group and its conversion effort.

+ Jews for Jesus, 60 Haight St., San Francisco, CA 94102 (415) 864-2600

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Same sex marriages banned in Australia

On Friday 13th August, the Australian Federal Government passed a new law effectively banning same-sex marriages.

The legislation, which defines marriage as the union of a man and a woman, passed the Senate yesterday with Labour's support. Labour supported the move to define marriage, but had opposed the government's bid to also ban same-sex adoption. The Australian Democrats are opposed to both aspects of the legislation and had referred it,

with Labour's support, to a Senate committee. In response, the government split the bill and re-introduced the marriage definition only.

The bill passed Friday by a Senate vote of 39-7 will insert into the country's 43-year-old Marriage Act the words: "Marriage means the union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life."

Also to be inserted is a provision stating: "Certain unions are not Marriages: a union solemnized in a foreign country between: (a) a man and another man; or (b) a woman and

another woman; must not be recognized as a marriage in Australia."

Needless to say, the gay lobby, the Greens and the Democrats are not happy. Please don't think that the opponents of the legislation will let it rest here. They are already talking about a High Court challenge.

For those that took the time to write or email, submissions to the Senate Committee numbered over 13,000- with the overwhelming majority opposing same sex marriages and adoption rights.

+ H. Hamelink in 'Una Sancta'

Reaching Mormons with the Gospel

D. Jason Wallace

Utah is a graveyard of evangelical gimmicks. Nearly every conceivable attempt has been made to reach Mormons with the gospel, but no large inroad has ever been made. Meanwhile, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has over 60,000 missionaries in 165 countries and grows by over 300,000 members each year. A recent Southern Baptist study estimates that they lose 282 members per week to the Mormons.

The most popular approach to reaching Mormons over the last thirty years has been to show them the blatant errors and contradictions that their "prophets" have uttered. For example, the Mormon prophet, Joseph Smith, claimed that American Indians were the lost tribes of Israel who had their skin turned dark as a curse for their rebellion. Yet modern archaeology and genetics refute those claims. Mormonism also has an extensive paper trail that shows its false prophecies and how its prophets have contradicted earlier prophets. As popular as

this approach has been, it has borne little fruit. It shows that Mormonism is wrong, but it doesn't present much of the real gospel. If people leave the LDS church over these issues, it is generally for atheism or some other error.

Cheap grace and "friendship evangelism" have also made few inroads. Mormons observe the worldliness of modern evangelicals and consider themselves more moral. The failure of these methods has led many to extremes. Fundamentalist street preachers stand outside the LDS semi-



The Mormon Temple at Salt Lake City, Utah, U.S.A.

annual conference and scream insults. Charismatics offer uncontrollable laughing or the “miraculous” transformation of mercury fillings into gold. None of this makes much of an impression on Mormons.

The first step

So how do we reach Mormons? God may bless a variety of approaches, but I believe that the first step is to realise that Mormonism itself is not the real problem. It is just a symptom of their unbelief.

The second step

The second step is to realise who Mormons are. They are not possessed with some special demon that makes them unreachable. Mormonism is simply an American version of gnosticism. The Mormon gospel boils down to the familiar plan of salvation in which a god helps good people save themselves. They believe that their god was once a man who achieved godhood by obedience to the gospel plan. They believe they may do the same if they are obedient and participate in the right ceremonies in their temples. Their gospel is as old as Satan’s lie in the Garden.

The third step

The third step is to communicate the true gospel clearly and in love. The temptation is

to start immediately by condemning their legalism, but they have been taught to hear such approaches as cheap grace. They quickly resort to “proof text Ping-Pong,” shooting back the biblical call for holiness to every passage that deals with free grace. I try to avoid this by explaining that legalism and cheap grace both deny the new birth: legalism denies its necessity, and cheap grace denies its effect.

It is important to realise that legalism is never the fundamental issue. It is simply a symptom of idolatry. The god of Mormonism is not that holy. In fact, the fall of Adam is seen in Mormonism as a good thing! Adam had to sin, they say, in order to keep God’s command to be fruitful and multiply. By Adam and Eve multiplying, we could have bodies and prove our worthiness to become gods.

Since their god is not that holy and sin is not that bad, real grace is not needed—only a grace described like this in the Book of Mormon: “If ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is His grace sufficient for you.”

Show them who God really is

It is important to show Mormons who God really is. Unfortunately, too many evangelicals present a sentimental view of the love of God that doesn’t challenge the

Mormon view of their “heavenly Father.” Few Mormons are familiar with the stories of God’s judgments in the Old and New Testaments. They show a God who is not a sentimentalised, exalted man, but a God who is a consuming fire. It is only when they understand God’s holiness and hatred of sin that they can appreciate His love for sinners and their need of a Saviour.

It is disarming for Mormons to hear this from someone who frankly admits the evil of his own heart. They are used to wearing masks for others and themselves. When someone doesn’t bother with a mask, but admits that he is a sinner, saved only by undeserved mercy, this can be very attractive.

The fourth step

Finally, we must pray. If we think that we can educate people into the kingdom, we are just as wrong as those who think they can love them or entertain them in. It becomes just one more gimmick. These things are too great for us, but as we know from our own conversion, nothing is impossible for God.

The author is the pastor of Christ Presbyterian Church in Salt Lake City, Utah. Reprinted from New Horizons, July 2004.

The saints of ancient British history

A Medley of Christian voices

Patricia van Laar

A curiosity about the saints of New Zealand place-names, was the inspiration for this series of articles. Having highlighted the major figures in early British Church history, I now propose to give brief summaries of other names belonging to the years already covered, that is from the time of the Roman occupation in 45 AD until the death of Columba 597 AD. [A reader pointed out a mistake in my first article on British history. 55 and 54 BC were the invasions of Britain by Julius Caesar, drummed into my brain at primary school, (together with William the Conqueror, 1066), but the Roman occupation proper did not begin until 45 AD, during the reign of the Emperor Claudius.]

The known Christians (minor saints, we perhaps could call them,) of this period are scarce in number and in information, but not without interest. The list below is not, however, all-inclusive.

St George, reputedly martyred on April 23, 303. He is known as Patron Saint of England, although believed to have been born in Cappadocia, to Christian parents, about or after 250 AD. He became a soldier under the Emperor Diocletian, but after his legendary killing of a dragon, gave up soldiering and went about preaching Christianity. [This is perhaps more plausible now that we know so much about dinosaurs!] His fame was brought to England during the Crusades, and must have caught the imagination of Edward III, 1327 – 1357, who proclaimed him Patron Saint of England.

St Helena 255-330. Mother of Constantine the Great, possibly also known as St Helen. (Some of you would have been born in a St Helen’s Maternity Hospital.) It is an assumption on my part that these two were one and the same, for, although I cannot be sure, I have not so far found any record of a second Helen.

In my account of the church history of Britain, Helena the wife of Constantius, was

surmised as possibly a British princess, daughter of King Coel. This, however, is by no means a certainty. Other historians

accept that she was, as reported, Helena of Bithynia, the daughter of a tavern keeper, and confused with Helena, the British princess who married the later Emperor Magnus Maximus, and who also had a son named Constantine. Whichever of these is correct, there is enough connection of both men with Britain, and the use of Helena’s (or Helen’s) name, to place her in this series. Constantius Chlorus, father of Constantine, served in his early career in Britain.

It is not known when or how the mother of Constantine became a Christian, traditionally after the Edict of Milan (313). She made a pilgrimage to Palestine, where she founded and supported several churches, especially those on the reputed sites of events in the Lord’s life. This encouraged the rise of the veneration of such sites, even though no absolute certainty can be attached to some of them, of pilgrimages and superstitions.



St George

Helena's reputation is one of benevolence and generosity.

St David (died c. 601) Born son of Prince Sandde of Cardiganshire and his wife Non, David was an eloquent preacher, became leader of the church in Wales, and was Bishop of Menevia (now St David's.) Although he is now "Patron Saint" of Wales, there are meager facts about this cleric, but plentiful legend. He presumably presided at two Welsh synods of his day, but there are no actual historical records of this.

His real self, as far as I can ascertain, remains shrouded in mystery.

St Kentigern c. 518 - 603, also called St Mungo. This is the derivation of the name of the Auckland School of St Kentigern's.

Born at Cubiass, Fife, to an aristocratic family, he was reared at the monastery of St Serf's (Servanus). He became Bishop of Glasgow in 543. Driven from Scotland by an opponent, Morken, he sought refuge in Wales and is purported to have founded the Monastery of St Asaph. Returning to Glasgow, he did much to restore Christianity around that city, and founded Glasgow (St Mungo) Cathedral. His death is related in myth, at the magical age of 185(!), in a fanciful legend, probably based on a factual background, connected to his last baptismal service.

He became known as the "Apostle of Strathclyde Britons."

St Asaph c. 570. A Welsh ecclesiastic, he succeeded Kentigern as head of the monastery at the confluence of the Clwyd and Elwy Rivers. He was made bishop of the see of Llanelwy, [Llan (Welsh) = church, Elwy (the River), so the Church on the Elwy] which afterwards became the city of St Asaphs.

These well known names but little known characters, are just a handful of the thousands of Christians who by the year 600, lived in the northern and western regions of the British Isles. Not many famous amongst them, these Christians were to be found mainly in the wattle huts, wooden cottages and stone huts of Scotland, Wales and Ireland. The monks had done their work for the Lord in these parts well.

England still awaited the Good News. It



St David

would be carried to them from the north and from the south, from the indigenous inhabitants and from foreign sources. Amongst them will be ones whose names, like their earlier counterparts, are remembered not for their own merit, but in gratitude for their contribution to the spread of the gospel of their Lord; names still in use today, fifteen hundred years later, in an undreamt of location on the opposite side of the world.

"For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." (Is. 11:9)

Mission in focus

Janice Reid

Aid mission to the Solomons

Albert Ruijne

On Tuesday the 1st of July 2004, the Rev. Kevin Rietveld wrote from the Solomon Islands a letter to the Reformed Churches of New Zealand in the Auckland Presbytery:

Dear Sessions and congregations,

As you are perhaps aware, SWIM Solomon Islands is a Mission of the CRCA in the

Solomon Islands, and it seeks to take a holistic approach to Mission, presenting both Word and Deed to the people who need to understand the riches of God's grace.

You are also aware that there has been much trouble in the country since 1999, and that now Solomon Islands is in a rebuilding stage, with significant assistance from the Australian and New Zealand Governments.

As part of our Reformed approach we have been able to facilitate much needed relief goods, particular to the areas where we are involved in Word ministry. Congregations from Australia have sent numerous shipping containers to the Solomon Islands with goods such as used clothing, educational and theological books, medical supplies etc. We have also been agents for some goods

that have come from New Zealand. In that respect we write to you.

It has just been made known to us that in the second half of July, the NZ Airforce will have about 4 flights to Honiara to pick up stores for the returning troops. It means they will have lots of space on planes going over, in which they are willing to ship freely any goods used for charitable purposes in the Solomon Islands.

We'd like to invite you to take this one-time opportunity to participate in a practical way by donating used clothing (Summer clothing, dresses, T shirts, trousers, shorts, etc. for all ages), linen (bed linen, towels, etc.), books suitable for pre-school and primary ages, used Christian and theological and study books, used Bibles, and any

medical goods (dressings, antibiotics, needles/syringes etc.). These goods are urgently needed here to assist poor families and church communities, and give us a great opportunity to show the love of Christ in action. Perhaps Deacons in each local church could coordinate it.

We thank you for considering this opportunity of showing mercy.

With Christian love,
Rev. Kevin Rietveld

The response

I was given this letter on Saturday the 3rd of July to consider for action as a deacon of the Bucklands Beach Reformed Presbyterian Church. As it was an urgent plea for help, I felt called to contact the Rev. Kevin Rietveld for more information and offer my assistance. On Monday the 5th of July I had a reply from Kevin, saying that he had not heard from any of the other churches in the Auckland Presbytery and that he would appreciate it if I could assist him in coordinating the aid mission from the New Zealand end. I prayed about it. It would be the first time that I would be doing something like this. I had all sorts of questions going through my mind. Who would I have to contact at the airforce? Where would the planes be leaving from? How much space was available if any and on which flights? How would I have to deal with customs? Who are the deacons in the other churches and their contact addresses in the Auckland Presbytery? How could I get everything organised in such a short time? Kevin replied quickly to my questions but he gave me a wrong name to contact at the airbase in Whenuapai, which delayed me. I was to contact Squadron Leader Graham Leckner, but they did not know such a person at the airbase. After several tries I got hold of a

Squadron Leader Gavin Leckner on the 9th of July who put me in contact with a person at the headquarters of the Ministry of Defence in Wellington, who would be able to advise me what to do, to get aid goods on the planes that pick up the troops from the Solomon Islands. I was advised that there were three flights planned to go to the Solomon Islands, but what I needed to do was to write a letter explaining what aid we would be giving and to whom. Then they would consider our request and if favourable would issue me with an authorisation number, which was to be put on every carton we sent. It was likely that I would be given some space. In the meantime, while the Defence H.Q. were considering the letter I sent them, I contacted the deacons in the Auckland Presbytery as I found them in the 2003 Yearbook of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. This proved not to be easy, as most of the contact names and addresses given in the yearbook for deacons, had changed. This caused a further delay in getting the message across to the churches. On Tuesday the 13th of July in the evening I got an email from Squadron Leader Leslie Tokana that our request for aid goods to be transported by the NZ Airforce to the Solomon Islands was granted on the basis of the attached conditions, which stated what we could and could not send and what the costumes requirements are. There was only space available on the flight departing on Thursday 22nd of July, and the goods had to be delivered by 9a.m. on Tuesday the 20th of July at the Whenuapai Airbase. I again got on the computer and the phone to contact the churches in the Auckland Presbytery to tell them about the urgency to get the goods not later than Monday evening the 19th of July to the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Bucklands Beach. There was no time to get

a great campaign on the way via the local church news bulletins. Announcements would have to be made from the pulpits on Sunday morning, the 18th of July, explaining the urgency for the requirements of the aid goods to the Solomons. On Sunday morning the 18th of July I asked for volunteers to assist with sorting and packing for shipment of the aid goods. I was blessed with six good volunteers who worked from 6.30p.m. to 9.30p.m. on the Monday evening. We had received goods from all but four churches in the presbytery. Most volunteers had gone home when I received a phone call from Pukekohe saying that they were on their way with a load, so could we wait and receive it. It arrived at 10.30p.m., and by midnight we had sorted and packed it. Jury van der Merwe, my fellow deacon, and two ladies, Joyce Larsen and Joyce Kraak, loaded his small truck with 3.3 cubic meter of aid goods to be delivered early in the morning to the airbase in Whenuapai. On his way to the airbase, Jury would call in at my place at 6a.m. on Tuesday morning the 20th of July to pick up the documentation to accompany the aid goods to the Solomon Islands, which I completed by 3a.m. that morning. Neither Jury van der Merwe nor I got much sleep that night. Jury was at the airbase by 7a.m. and at his place of work by 8 a.m. that Tuesday.

Thankful for the response

I am very thankful for the way most deacons responded to this urgent request for aid to SWIM (Short Workshops In Mission), which is a ministry of the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia. SWIM Solomon Islands is registered as a Charitable Trust in the Solomon Islands, and is an Associate Member of the Solomon Islands Christian Association - S.I.C.A.). We thank the Lord for leading us in this mission and we thank everyone who has contributed in kind for the needs of the people in the Solomon Islands. The two Hamilton Congregations did not get their aid goods delivered in time for the flight on 22nd of July so we prayed that there would be sufficient space on the last flight to the Solomons on the 29th of July. I had asked Leslie Tokana at Defence H.Q. in Wellington to let me know if there was any more space. He contacted me on the 27th of July and told me there was space for 120 kg on the flight leaving the 29th of July, so could I have the goods there as soon as possible but not later than 9a.m. on the 28th of July. Again, Jury van der Merwe was able to help with the transport and got the goods from Hamilton and Mangere there on time. A total of 110.6kg for that trip, or just under 2 cubic meter of aid goods! In total we have sent 73 cartons or 765.6kg. That adds up to 5 cubic metres of aid goods! This consisted of 41 cartons of clothing, 14 cartons of books and stationery items, 11 cartons of linen, 5



Rachel and her children were some of the recipients of our clothes

cartons of medical supplies, 1 carton soft toys and toys, 1 carton of mixed goods.

For me this has been an exercise of faith. I had to dare to take this step of faith into the unknown. I did not know if there was any space available on the RNZAF flights to the Solomon Islands. I did not know when there were flights with available space. I did not know whom to contact in the churches of the Auckland presbytery. I did not know who would respond to this aid request. I did not know how much aid material would be collected. I did not know how the goods would get to a central place and from there to the airbase. I did not know what documentation

was required. I did not know what was allowed to be sent and not to be sent. I did not know who would volunteer to help me with the collection and sorting and packing of the Aid goods.

Thankful to the Lord

I prayed that God would lead me to people that could help me with the specific questions I had. I remembered that the Bible had taught me to ask, and I would receive if my motive was right. God has blessed me with the right people at the right time with the right goods and the right space and transport at the right time at the right price

for the right purpose. With the help of God and God's people, this mission has been completed. Now on to the next mission! When and where that will be I do not know as yet. Perhaps it is to my neighbour at work, or my family or community or church. God knows ,and on Him I depend at all times.

Yours in Christ's service,

Albert Ruijne
Deacon
Buckland's Beach
Reformed Presbyterian Church

Country profile: Nepal

Nepal is perhaps best known to New Zealanders as the home of Mount Everest (Nepalese call it *Sagarmatha*), in view of our national pride in the accomplishments of Sir Edmund Hillary, along with his fellow-mountaineer, Tensing Norgay, who were the first to conquer Nepal's—and the world's—tallest peak.

Less well known, perhaps, is the turbulent political history of the country, especially in recent years. But call to mind the media reports about a drunken shooting spree by Crown Prince Dipendra, who in 2002 killed the King, the Queen, and eight other members of the royal family; then died the next day from injuries he'd inflicted on himself. Or the Nepal Communist Party (Maoist) who began an insurrection in 1996; their struggle to date has claimed over 8,000 lives.

But there's more to Nepal than beautiful scenery and wild politics. Some 40% of the population live below the poverty line, with the gross national income per capita only around \$370.00NZ. Foreign aid is vital for the continued existence of many Nepalese; and foreign assistance will be needed if the country is to reverse some of the environmental challenges that face it.



Nepal has a distinctive Hindu and Buddhist culture; some 74% of the population is Hindu, and Nepal claims to be the world's only Hindu Kingdom. Approximately 1.9% of the population is Christian. In 2000, there were almost 24 million Nepalese, and only some 717 expatriate missionaries working in the country: that's one missionary to every 33,450 people—bit of a stretch! But their work is fraught with challenges: the law in Nepal states that people are free to choose their religion, but it is illegal to convert others. Any infringing of this is liable to lead to imprisonment for nationals or expulsion of foreigners. Nepal rates 42nd on the Persecution Index.

Pray for Nepal:

1. Praise the Lord for the opening up of this country to the Gospel: no Christian was officially allowed to live in Nepal before 1960. By 1990 there was a measure of religious freedom (but not to proselytize).
2. Praise the Lord for the growth of the church since 1960; it is estimated that there are as many as half a million believers in the country, now.
3. Pray for increased religious freedom, and for boldness on the part of Nepali and expat believers to share the Good News with others—even at the risk of persecution.
4. Pray for unity of believers, with good teaching and a correct understanding of Scripture.
5. Pray for the integrity of national believers, especially those supported by foreign funds; there is a very real danger of misuse of power and funds, and of false teachings creeping in, when foreign support is the basis on which a church is built.
6. Pray for the growth of mature leaders in the church in Nepal; most believers are first-generation Christians, and have a lot of maturing to do.
7. Pray for believers to have deliverance from persecution, and for courage and faith to withstand it when it comes.

Information from *Operation World CD-ROM*, Copyright ©2001 Patrick Johnstone. Used with permission. Additional information from CIA World Factbook and BBC online country profiles.

A feminine focus

The feminine virtues – today?

Sally Davey

For the past ten years or so I've had a lot of trouble buying clothes. Not because I'm an odd size or shape, or because I don't especially like black or orange or bright citrus green. No, it's just that the clothes seem so ugly. In vain I've window-shopped my way through malls, hoping to find a new pair of shoes. But year after year, surveying footwear that more closely resembles soldiers' boots than women's shoes, I've come to the conclusion that there's something wrong with the thinking behind women's clothes design. Are manufacturers trying to make us look like women, or men? What is going on? But the difficulties don't stop there. Modesty in clothing is a big problem. I've never liked skin-tight teeshirts, skirts with thigh-high splits or pants that are designed to hang on the hips. All of these fashion items draw attention to the body in deliberately provocative ways; and if one is not inclined to be provocative, one's clothing options are sadly curtailed. Many is the time, after fruitlessly searching the racks, I've been thankful that my mother taught me how to sew.

The thinking of western culture

But of course dress design is not the real

problem. It simply reflects what has gone on in the thinking of western culture in the past few decades. Ideas about womanhood and femininity have gone through some profound alterations. Most of us, even in the Church at times, are confused about what it means to be a woman. It would be easy to blame the feminist movement for everything, but I'm convinced that is not a complete answer. It is not just a rebellion of women against being women: men are also in rebellion – against decency, modesty and propriety. There is a coarseness and lewdness around that stems, I have no doubt, from an abandonment of the kinds of virtues described in the bible. We see it in language, manners (or lack of them) as well as in dress – and portrayed in movies, television and light fiction as well as in homes and on the streets of every western nation. Sometimes it seems as if people are behaving no better than animals. Yet this has been the case, historically, whenever a society turns its backs on the ways of God. Think of the record of the book of Judges.

The thinking of the past

Not so long ago our editor sent me a book entitled *The True Woman*, by a writer named William M. Thayer. Written in the late nineteenth century in honour of the principal of a girls' school, this book outlines, a chapter at a time, the kinds of Christian virtues this lady tried to teach her pupils during her lifetime. It is an attractive picture. The portraits of the different feminine virtues are well-drawn and definitely not one-dimensional. They are a combination of sweetness, gentleness and strength. Who wouldn't want to be like that (something like Jane and Elizabeth Bennet and Jane Eyre all rolled into one)? But it would be easy to conclude that everyone back then would have

read William Thayer with little more than a passing nod. Surely most people agreed what feminine character should be like. There is some truth in this, but a close read reveals that most books of this type were written out of concern that the values they describe would be understood valued, and endure – for the ongoing good of society. There was always a possibility they would not.

Past threats

When this type of book had its origin about a century earlier, serious Christians were worried that dangerous influences in their day threatened to destroy the Christian foundations of English society. These ideas, the fuel of the French Revolution, challenged traditional authorities such as the Church and the government of the day. In their radical form they challenged the entire social order: and in the Revolution's most radical phase the French revolutionaries tried to destroy the Christian faith in the minds and hearts of Frenchmen, replacing it with a vague hotch-potch of ideas about reason and the innate goodness of man. The horrors of the Reign of Terror, with its mass executions by guillotine, exposed this as foolishness – but dangerous foolishness. A number of English observers, including Edmund Burke, saw what all this could do to English life if it ever became attractive. He defended the English social order, and urged that proper family life, based on Christian principles, was the key to ensuring wider political and social stability. If the family were secure, he believed, then so would society as a whole be. Families were the "little platoons" which won the battle for the whole society. In Burke's view, women, by virtue of their gentleness and softening influence, had a very important role to play in the training of future generations of Englishmen. Men, by their chivalry and protective instincts, would encourage women in maintaining these things. Burke was opposed by proto-feminists of his time like writer Mary Wollstonecraft. She denied there was any inherent difference between men and women, and urged women to assert themselves, and to suspect marriage as a "trap". But from this time and throughout the century, Christian writers like Hannah More took up the cause of promoting the importance of the feminine virtues – both because they were what God taught in His Word, and because femininity was important to the stability, and continuation of English society. This was her plea:

"I would call on [women] to come forward and contribute their full and fair proportion towards the saving of their country. But I would call on them to come forward, without



departing from the dignity of their rank, without blemishing the delicacy of their sex.”

The response

More's *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799) was the first of a long series of books that outlined the importance of the feminine virtues to society in a time that seemed so unstable. Her writings, and those of her successors, did much to stabilise Victorian society. What were the qualities these women wrote about? Such things as piety, purity, modesty, gentleness, self-control and discretion – the quiet qualities that brought up children to serve Christ, that nursed sick husbands and dying parents – that sacrificed self and deferred pleasure. These are the things that are basic to the strength of a healthy society. But the very fact that people like More kept writing books to stress these virtues indicates that there was always a danger they could be neglected, or even rejected altogether. Our own time suggests that this danger has indeed become reality. What are the signals?

Indistinct distinctions

We have gone far beyond the point where people assume there are important distinctions between the sexes. Nobody seems to think women are more delicate than men, are in need of protection, or are less prone to the coarseness and roughness that often accompany the more rugged masculine tendencies. Few seem to believe in the idea of femininity any more at all. In many social situations women dress as carelessly, behave as roughly and swear as coarsely as men. In most western countries women (wives and mothers included) serve in combat situations in the armed forces. We have women drinking and smoking as heavily as only men would have some decades ago. We have women playing soccer and rugby – even mud-wrestling! Now, these may be extreme activities that cannot be said to prove a general point about our society – but it cannot be denied that they stem from the idea that there are no significant, fundamental differences between the sexes. Try objecting that the above activities are not suitable for women, and the answers you will be given will certainly prove my point.

In May this year an interesting article appeared in the *Christchurch Press*. Reporter Keri Welham interviewed three young women as representatives of “Generation Y” (in case you're wondering, they are the successors of “Generation X” who succeeded the “Baby Boomers” – people now in their twenties). These young women all spoke of an attitude to life that may be collectively summed up as “living for today.” They spend all their money as they earn it; and their goals in life seem to be a nice apartment, a big-screen

TV, clothing, jewellery and plenty of nights out at bars and nightclubs. They describe themselves as “way more image-conscious than our parents were. We're materialistic, money-hungry, flighty.” They change jobs and boyfriends frequently, are usually heavily indebted and have few long-term goals they would sacrifice immediate pleasures for. Apart from the short-term dangers such recklessness may bring with it, Welham observes that this approach to life does not prepare these young women for the difficulties that lie in wait for their generation. In all likelihood they will face a double-dependency burden in the future: perhaps two sets of parents who will live till very old age (due to advances in modern medicine) – but without the financial independence of today's elderly – as well as the need to pay for the education of the children born to them – finally – in their mid or late thirties. The picture Welham paints is fairly bleak: these young women seem to lack the sort of values, or moral fibre, that will enable them to maintain good relationships in marriage, or with parents and children under any sort of stress at all. And what of society as a whole if it is peopled by women who have lived only for themselves in a hedonistic, live-for-today kind of way?

Feminism over femininity

Now, you really may think I am overstating the case – and of course there are many people who do not live as dangerously as I (and this newspaper article) have described. However, I think it would be true to say that what we are seeing is the wholesale replacing of femininity and the biblical ideas which are its foundation, with ideas about women that are producing a worse revolution than the French one.

Well then, how do we fare in the church with respect to the subject of femininity? You may assume that because, as I argue, feminine virtues stem from biblical ideas, that the church upholds them. Not necessarily so. I think it would be true to say that there is some confusion in the church about the whole subject. As in Hannah More's day, feminism has had its effect – only overwhelmingly so today. At first the evangelical church resisted it, but there has been considerable capitulation in recent decades. For example, how many New Zealand denominations still have a clear teaching that women should not serve in office (*are there others than us, the Grace Presbyterian churches and the Roman Catholics*)? But in more general terms, there are many of us now who have doubts about whether women should think and behave differently from men. Should we assume men will act protectively toward us? Should we dress in a distinctively feminine way in church – or in any social situation, for that matter?

Should we speak quietly, or less often than men in public discussion? Should we publicly contradict our husbands? The questions go on. Women in our churches (and men, for that matter) tend to react in two ways to these topics. We tend either to be influenced (often subtly, and unwittingly) by the world's there-is-no-difference assumptions – or we overreact in an “extreme” kind of way. By this I mean a retreating from the world into a family-fortress type of model that places father at the head, as filter of all that goes on between the world and his wife and daughters. In this scenario, women are not expected to think for themselves, weigh up the factors, and learn to become discerning. That is not the answer either.

The guidance of the Bible

The only answer is to know the Scriptures well – particularly those passages that relate to the subject of femininity. One can think of chapters like Proverbs 31, Titus 2 and 1 Peter 3 to begin with. Knowing these texts – and their contexts – is critical. But so is knowing what motivates the thinking of our own age, so that we can properly discern whether we ought or ought not think, speak and act in the way those around us do. Should we take this or that course at polytech or university? Should we use that particular popular expression in our speech? Should we wear that style of trousers or swimwear? The principles of those three chapters of Scripture will do a lot to help us there. And if we're still in doubt, there are some good books based on the teaching of those and other chapters. Writers Susan Hunt, Elizabeth George, Elisabeth Elliot and Edith Schaeffer have thought hard about these things and have much to say that can help us.

Taking a look at what mattered in the past

But I want to try a little exercise in the next few articles I've planned for *Faith in Focus*. Following the nineteenth century writers I mentioned earlier, I'd like to take a few of what they listed as the feminine virtues, explore their biblical foundation, and then try and work out their application in our own early twenty-first century New Zealand setting. These womanly qualities, as I've seen them described, have often captivated me. Why am I not more like that? I ask myself. They seem elusive, even unattainable. I would love to make them real – and perhaps, through careful study, more attainable. I'm also hoping that this effort will help to de-mystify what can often sound like awfully old-fashioned Victorian ideals, and so make them more alive and attractive to you, too. Good ideas never go out of date – really.

Focus on home

Gleanings from our bulletins...

Andrew Reinders

Avondale

A note from Levi Meinsma: A big thank-you to all those people who looked after my Mummy and Daddy by providing them (and my brothers!) with lots of yummy food for the two weeks after I was born. They told me that they really appreciated it. Also thank you for the lovely cards and gifts I received, I really liked them heaps. Love, Levi and the family

Bishopdale

Pastoral. Update from Rob and Robyn. Our little Sam is home!! He came home last Sunday and we have had a lovely week together as a family at last! It has been a long road to get here and we marvel at God's goodness to us. Sam had his 100 days birthday in the hospital on 14th July, complete with birthday cake and singing by the staff!! It was a great milestone to share with them before we came home. Sam now weighs 3860 grams and is behaving pretty much like a newborn baby. He still requires constant oxygen assistance and will do for several months. He is still fragile and can get infections easily so we need to keep him safe. If you wish to visit, call us, and please do not be offended when we ask about your state of health! It may be just a cold, but to us it is a trip to hospital for Sam. Sam is a testimony to the power of prayer and to God's greatness, and we thank you again for your love, support and continuing prayers for Sam and for us. A special huge thanks to those who looked after Emily and Jack so Robyn could go to Sam every day. Rob, Robyn, Emily, Jack and Sam Bosma.

Pastoral: The Rev Dick (65) and Mary (64) Wynja have accepted our invitation for a short term ministry. They will be with us from 6 October to 4 January. The Rev Wynja is a retired pastor from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and they live in Denver, Colorado. Mrs Wynja is also a keen organist. Please pray for them as they prepare to travel and minister to us.

Buckland's Beach

Guess Who's Coming To Dinner? Yes, this very successful way of getting to know each other is on again this year. The idea is that you will be either a host or else a visitor to dinner on Saturday evening, August 21. The idea and details are explained on the information sheet that will be handed out to you today. Please make sure that you get one. The sheet has a fill-in section. Fill it in as soon as possible and hand it to Lynette van Garderen or, next week, to Gonny.

Pastoral. This evening we extend a very special welcome to Dr Pieter van Huyssteen of Avondale, who will lead us in worship. Our brother has previously led the Afrikaans services here and his ministry was much appreciated. Br van Huyssteen is a member of the Reformed Church of Avondale and preaches regularly. He has previously been a professor in Semitic languages (Hebrew, Aramaic) at Potchefstroom University and is currently Dean of Studies at New Covenant International Bible College here in Auckland. It is a pleasure and privilege to welcome him to our pulpit this evening.

Dunedin

Ministerial Anagrams. Try this quiz at home. Each of the following clues contains a sequence of two, three or four words, the letters of which when re-arranged gives the name of one of the ministers of our denomination. For example, in the sentence, "She eats rice in jade palaces", the letters of the words "rice in jade" may be re-arranged to form "Janice Reid". Answers next week, space permitting. Happy hunting.

With ripe inner prose he silenced the baying scoffers.

We haven't seen his jog nor his canter, but his stroll is so sedate.

This art savant has many pictures adorning the walls of the manse.

The trumpet blew similar tunes to the organ. Solve the puzzle of the cube. Oh try, it's too hard for me!

On hearing the harp call, daub your forehead with gilt.

Nave and transept join at chancel.

Little Jack Horner jogs to his corner.

Jam jars, bike wheels and pizza boxes all lay strewn about.

Inattentive catechumens wilt in my glare.

In a daze, join hum before breaking into song.

How to jam a link? Zig zag all over the room and it will soon be fast.

His grand kin averred he is the best.

From the whisper jet, short horn blasts could be heard.

Feel how the bumps make the van jar. Hold her tight else she will escape.

Don't flinch men, ail not!

Curiously, he stored his books in a high canvas ark.

Although this is a hard psalm to sing, perseverance has its rewards.

A white male was the sole dove in the cote.

Foxton

Ten Pin Bowling Night. The congregation is invited to a Ten Pin Bowling night this coming Saturday night at Palmerston North at 7:30 p.m. Each game costs \$4.50 and a number of lanes have already been booked. The Senior Youth Club will also be there, so we can also spend some time with them as well. For bookings, please let Allan Thomson know.

Hukanui

Wedding Banns: Logan Hagoort and Josie Bodle have indicated their desire to be united in marriage before the Lord and His people. Lord willing, the celebration of this event will take place on Saturday 11th September here at the Hukanui church.

North Shore

This week, at 6.30 on Tuesday morning, the Lord took home to himself our sister, Ans Schouten, after living in Beechworth Home for the last eight years. The funeral was held at Schnapper Rock Rd chapel and cemetery yesterday. Ans turned 90 just a couple of months ago. She has been a faithful member of the Reformed Churches since coming to New Zealand in the early '50s with her husband and four sons, one of whom, Jan and his wife Marion, are members of the Forrest Hill Presbyterian Church. She had known both poverty in Holland during the War years, and grief when her husband left her over thirty years ago. I visited her often in Palmerston North, when she still had her full faculties, and there is no doubt in my mind at all that she is the Lord's and that at this moment she is "with Christ, which is far better." And for that we may be truly thankful to the Lord and rejoice.

Palmerston North

Student get-together at the Manse. We had a great time last time so the Kavanaghs would like to invite again all tertiary students, young workers and seventh formers to the Manse at 2 Christian Place, Monday 2nd August, at 7.45pm. This will be an informal time (coffee, fellowship, and brief devotional from Rev. Kavanagh), to allow the opportunity to meet each other, and to meet up with the students from Masterton and

Hastings Reformed Churches who are not usually in Palmerston North at the weekends. Please feel free to bring other friends, too. Chris and Julie.

Singing. Anyone desirous of singing some extra praises is welcome to join us after the morning service today. We will sing from the Psalter #s 137, 138, 146, 150, 151 and 152 for the pure joy of singing them!

Heart Sisters Junior. Due to popular demand (!) we are holding a Junior Heart Sisters. This is open to any girls and young women over the age of 8 (and any adults who wish to join in). Please check with your parents first if you can join, then take a form in the Library. Place your completed form in the basket (in the library) by next Sunday evening. We will give you your Heart Sister in two weeks time. Remember not to tell anyone who your sister is, we will hold an evening in October for a 'Junior Heart Sisters Reveal'.

Pukekohe

Session Prayer & Planning Day: A Session Prayer and Planning Day will be held this Saturday 7 August from 8:00am – 2:00pm. If you have any suggestions for the Session please pass them on before that day.

Sermons by email: If you would like to receive the sermons of Rev. John Haverland by email each week you can subscribe to the email list by going to - rcnz.org.nz/mailman/listinfo - and following the instructions.

Silverstream

Session has decided to put forward a mission proposal to the congregation. The proposal is much the same as we have done before - we hope to send Br. & Sr. James back to Mbale, to assist the OPC in their work there for a number of months. You will find details on the sheet handed out. Please consider this matter very carefully, and prayerfully, as we need to act quickly if the James's are to be in Mbale in time for the next semester of teaching. In order to meet this deadline, Session decided to call for a congregational meeting after the morning service, next Lord's Day (July 25), to seek congregational agreement. We are thankful to the Lord that in His providence this mission field has opened up again for the OPC, and for us as well. Isn't it a privilege to be able to join in bringing the Gospel to people who are eager to hear!

A Fun Evening for All. Theatre Sports will be held at the church on August 21 from 7:45 pm. Come and join in a fun evening for all. All you need to bring is your acting talent. If you're wondering what theatre sports are, they are like physical sports, but instead of running and jumping you will need to act in

impromptu situations. Lots of fun guaranteed. Any questions, please see Richard Wharekawa.

Wainuiomata

Ladies' Fellowship Evening. Wednesday, 8 September has been booked at Village Beads in Petone for a ladies fellowship evening. We need to know the numbers of those interested in going as we need to have a minimum of 10. The cost will be \$3 plus the cost of whatever you want to make (i.e. earrings can start from as little as \$3.50). Please let Wilma know by the 15th of August if you are interested or if you have any questions.

AUCKLAND PRESBYTERY MEETING, 30TH JULY 2004

The Rev. Reinier Noppers, on behalf of the convening church of Hukanui, opened our meeting by the reading of Psalm 115, prayer and inviting us to sing number 227 from the Psalter Hymnal. Following this the Hukanui brethren checked the credentials of the various delegates. Having found all in order the meeting was instituted with the Rev. John Haverland in the chair, Rev. Noppers as vice-chairman, Br Peter van der Wel as Clerk, and the Rev. Sjikr Bajema as the reporter.

In amongst matters arising from the previous Minutes, it was agreed that from now on Church Visitation reports are to be summarised by the church visitors and that summary sent to the Presbytery Clerk to go out with the material for the next meeting, with a full copy of the visitation report going to the church visited. It was noted that a new Presbytery preaching roster was in action. With Hamilton's forthcoming vacancy, Presbytery considered their request for pulpit supply. It was decided that they will be supplied once a fortnight by ministers from the Auckland churches. A Presbytery Study Day was set for October 30th in Pukekohe. Details will follow.

Some time was then spent in considering further the 'Tongues issue'. The Rev. John Rogers presented North Shore's Suggested Resolutions. Out of this Presbytery passed the following motion:

"To rescind Recommendation 2 as adopted by Presbytery and revert to Recommendation 2 as originally proposed by the Presbytery Committee, viz., *Concur with Committee's concern that the Rev. van Garderen based his sermon on an unconvincing understanding of tongues as unintelligible utterances.*

Ground: This (original) recommendation flows logically out of the Committee's concerns and reasoning. As amended by Presbytery it read "*on a possible but unconvincing understanding.*" It is difficult to see what the additional words add; indeed, it would seem only to compromise the original recommendation.

Following further discussion, it was agreed that this matter will be further considered and, Lord willing, finalised at our next meeting.

The credentials for the Rev. Bill Wiersma were signed on Presbytery's behalf by the chairman and the clerk. The chairman then took the opportunity to thank the Rev. Wiersma for his long and fruitful service to the Hamilton churches, to the churches of Presbytery, and the denomination. The Rev. Dirk van Garderen was appointed as Presbytery representative at the Rev. Wiersma's farewell service in Hamilton on the 8th of August.

S.B.

Ladies Aid (Reformed Theological College)

A big "thank you" for all those, who have collected and contributed to the "Ladies Aid" Fund. We are still waiting for a requested annual report from the Australian Ladies Aid Committee regarding what has been done and what still can be done in the College and for the students of the RTC, with the Ladies Aid monies. Please accept our apologies for the lateness of the publication of the following contributions in 2003.

Congregation of :

Avondale	\$ 604.70
Bishopdale	\$ 71.15
Bucklands Beach	\$ 293.80
Christchurch	\$ 196.00
Dunedin	\$ 107.70
Hamilton	\$ 91.30
Mangere	\$ 87.00
Nelson	\$ 102.50
Oamaru	\$ 25.00
Palmerston-North	\$ 107.60
Wainuiomata	\$ 22.25

If you do not yet share in this project, or you know somebody who would like to have a "Saving Box", please contact your local representative.

Family Camp 2003-2004

Will you be enjoying the same this camp?

Tinus and Lila Spies

With great excitement we awaited our first Family Camp - 2003-2004 - encouraged by our friends who attended the previous years. We were all very silent when we drove into the beautiful camp site, not knowing what exactly to expect. Will we be able to relax amongst so many people? When we entered

the dining room the first night we were a bit overwhelmed with all the new faces but were welcomed with open arms by all the people.

The children looked up their friends very quickly and made a lot of new friends on their first night.

Reverends Sjirk Bajema and Gary Milne were introduced to us on Saturday night and they were going to look after us spiritually. Rev. Bajema led the evening studies about 'A Pilgrims Progress' and Rev. Gary Milne the book of Ruth in the mornings.

The children's program was excellently done and most of the time we didn't know we had children. They were swimming, canoeing, and playing with all their friends.

In the hall was a whole bookstore and we browsed through all the wonderful material available.

The sport was a whole different ball-game with all the spirited people of Canterbury attending the camp. What a pleasure seeing them with their red and black clothes and flags and that song that kept going in my

head for days. Fortunately they only beat Palmerston North with the volleyball but couldn't beat Auckland with the soccer.

One of the highlights of the camp was the Island banquet. Everybody dressed up in their most colourful island clothes. The atmosphere was amazing and the cooks exceeded all expectations with the food.

After the evening service on New Year's Eve we were surprised with 'olie bollen', a Dutch tradition. In the hall was line dancing and the rest of us enjoyed games in the dining room. We all assembled outside around the camp fire to wait for the new year, and stayed there to sing hymns.

On the last night we had the concert and a lot of families participated. What a lot of talent! All the trophies were handed out, from fishing to chess.

We as a family had a very enjoyable time and will strongly recommend the camp to all families.



Family Camp

The 2004-2005 Family camp will run from 27 December to 1 January. This is a short camp running from Monday to Saturday). Registration forms coming to churches soon. Any questions or early cabin bookings (for special needs only at this stage) to dirk@familynet.nz